



Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday, 4th March,
2014
7.00 pm

Committee Room Two
Town Hall
Redditch



www.redditchbc.gov.uk

Access to Information - Your Rights

The Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 widened the rights of press and public to attend Local Authority meetings and to see certain documents. Recently the Freedom of Information Act 2000, has further broadened these rights, and limited exemptions under the 1985 Act.

Your main rights are set out below:-

- Automatic right to attend all Council and Committee meetings unless the business would disclose confidential or “exempt” information.
- Automatic right to inspect agenda and public reports at least five days before the date of the meeting.
- Automatic right to inspect minutes of the Council and its Committees (or summaries of business undertaken in private) for up to six years following a meeting.
- Automatic right to inspect lists of background papers used in the preparation of public reports.
- Access, upon request, to the background papers on which reports are based for a period of up to four years from the date of the meeting.
- Access to a public register stating the names and addresses and electoral areas of all Councillors with details of the membership of all Committees etc.
- A reasonable number of copies of agenda and reports relating to items to be considered in public must be made available to the public attending meetings of the Council and its Committees etc.
- Access to a list specifying those powers which the Council has delegated to its Officers indicating also the titles of the Officers concerned.
- Access to a summary of the rights of the public to attend meetings of the Council and its Committees etc. and to inspect and copy documents.
- In addition, the public now has a right to be present when the Council determines “Key Decisions” unless the business would disclose confidential or “exempt” information.
- Unless otherwise stated, all items of business before the Executive Committee are Key Decisions.
- (Copies of Agenda Lists are published in advance of the meetings on the Council’s Website:
www.redditchbc.gov.uk

**If you have any queries on this Agenda or any of the decisions taken or wish to exercise any of the above rights of access to information, please contact
Jess Bayley and Amanda Scarce
Democratic Services Officers**

**Town Hall, Walter Stranz Square, Redditch, B98 8AH
Tel: 01527 64252 (Ext. 3268 / 3267) Fax: (01527) 65216
e.mail: jess.bayley@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk /
a.scarce@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk**

Welcome to today's meeting.

Guidance for the Public

Agenda Papers

The **Agenda List** at the front of the Agenda summarises the issues to be discussed and is followed by the Officers' full supporting **Reports**.

Chair

The Chair is responsible for the proper conduct of the meeting. Generally to one side of the Chair is the Committee Support Officer who gives advice on the proper conduct of the meeting and ensures that the debate and the decisions are properly recorded. On the Chair's other side are the relevant Council Officers. The Councillors ("Members") of the Committee occupy the remaining seats around the table.

Running Order

Items will normally be taken in the order printed but, in particular circumstances, the Chair may agree to vary the order.

Refreshments : tea, coffee and water are normally available at meetings - please serve yourself.

Decisions

Decisions at the meeting will be taken by the **Councillors** who are the democratically elected representatives. They are advised by **Officers** who are paid professionals and do not have a vote.

Members of the Public

Members of the public may, by prior arrangement, speak at meetings of the Council or its Committees. Specific procedures exist for Appeals Hearings or for meetings involving Licence or Planning Applications. For further information on this point, please speak to the Committee Support Officer.

Special Arrangements

If you have any particular needs, please contact the Committee Support Officer.

Infra-red devices for the hearing impaired are available on request at the meeting. Other facilities may require prior arrangement.

Further Information

If you require any further information, please contact the Committee Support Officer (see foot of page opposite).

Fire/ Emergency instructions

If the alarm is sounded, please leave the building by the nearest available exit – these are clearly indicated within all the Committee Rooms.

If you discover a fire, inform a member of staff or operate the nearest alarm call point (wall mounted red rectangular box). In the event of the fire alarm sounding, leave the building immediately following the fire exit signs. Officers have been appointed with responsibility to ensure that all visitors are escorted from the building.

Do Not stop to collect personal belongings.

Do Not use lifts.

Do Not re-enter the building until told to do so.

The emergency Assembly Area is on Walter Stranz Square.



Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday, 4th March, 2014

7.00 pm

Committee Room 2 Town Hall

Agenda

Membership:

Cllrs: David Bush (Chair) Carole Gandy
Gay Hopkins (Vice-Chair) Alan Mason
Andrew Brazier Yvonne Smith
Simon Chalk Pat Witherspoon
Andrew Fry

1. Apologies and named substitutes	To receive apologies for absence and details of any Councillor (or co-optee substitute) nominated to attend this meeting in place of a member of this Committee.
2. Declarations of interest and of Party Whip	To invite Councillors to declare any Disclosable Pecuniary Interests or Other Disclosable Interests they may have in items on the agenda, and to confirm the nature of those interests, and any Party Whip.
3. Minutes (Pages 1 - 8)	To confirm the minutes of the most recent meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee as a correct record. (Minutes attached) (No Specific Ward Relevance)
4. Dial A Ride - Monitoring Update Report (Pages 9 - 12) R Griffin, Dial a Ride & Shopmobility Manager	To receive a report detailing the impact of group hire arrangements in use of Dial a Ride Vehicles on participation in community activities. (Members are asked to note that this vehicle hire arrangement was introduced in line with proposals made by the Youth Services Provision Task Group in 2012). (Report attached) All Wards

Overview and Scrutiny

Committee

Tuesday, 4th March, 2014

<p>5. Threadneedle House - Information Report</p> <p>J Pickering - Exec Director (Finance and Corporate Resources)</p>	<p>To consider further information about the sale arrangements for Threadneedle House.</p> <p>(Presentation to follow)</p> <p>(Abbey Ward)</p>
<p>6. Draft Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2013/14</p> <p>(Pages 13 - 32)</p> <p>Councillor David Bush</p>	<p>To consider and, where appropriate to agree any proposed changes to the draft Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report detailing the achievements of the Committee and Task Groups during the year.</p> <p>Members are asked to note that three gaps have been left in the report which will be filled with photographs that are due to be taken in March 2014.</p> <p>(Subject to any amendments made during this meeting, the final version of the annual report is due to be presented by the Chair at a meeting of full Council on 31st March 2014).</p> <p>(Draft report attached)</p> <p>All Wards</p>
<p>7. Executive Committee Minutes and Scrutiny of the Executive Committee's Work Programme</p> <p>(Pages 33 - 40)</p>	<p>To consider the minutes of the latest meeting(s) of the Executive Committee and also to consider whether any items on the Executive Committee's Work Programme are suitable for scrutiny.</p> <p>(Minutes from 11th February meeting attached, minutes from 24th February and Executive Work Programme to follow).</p> <p>(No Specific Ward Relevance)</p>
<p>8. Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme</p> <p>(Pages 41 - 44)</p>	<p>To consider the Committee's current Work Programme, and potential items for addition to the list arising from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Forward Plan / Committee agendas• External publications• Other sources. <p>(Report attached)</p> <p>(No Specific Ward Relevance)</p>

Overview and Scrutiny

Committee

Tuesday, 4th March, 2014

9. Task Groups - Progress Reports

(Pages 45 - 46)

Councillor Alan Mason,
Councillor David Bush,
Councillor Carole Gandy,
Councillor Gay Hopkins,
Councillor Pat Witherspoon

To consider progress to date on the current reviews against the terms set by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The current reviews in progress are:

- a) Abbey Stadium Task Group – Chair, Councillor Gandy;
- b) Football Task Group – Chair, Councillor Bush;
- c) Joint WRS Scrutiny Review – lead Member, Councillor Mason;
- d) Landscaping Task Group – Chair, Councillor Hopkins; and
- e) Voluntary Sector Task Group – Chair, Councillor Witherspoon.

(Verbal reports to follow and one written update attached)

(Abbey Ward)

10. Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Pat Witherspoon

To receive a verbal update on the recent work of the Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

(Verbal report)

(No Specific Ward Relevance)

Overview and Scrutiny

Committee

Tuesday, 4th March, 2014

11. Exclusion of the Press and Public

Should it be necessary, in the opinion of the Borough Director, during the course of the meeting to consider excluding the public from the meeting on the grounds that exempt information is likely to be divulged, it may be necessary to move the following resolution:

“That, under S.100 (A) (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following matter(s) on the grounds that it/they involve(s) the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the relevant paragraphs (to be specified) of Part 1 of Schedule 12 (A) of the said Act”.

These paragraphs are as follows:

Subject to the “public interest” test, information relating to:

- Para 1 – any individual;
- Para 2 – the identity of any individual;
- Para 3 – financial or business affairs;
- Para 4 – labour relations matters;
- Para 5 – legal professional privilege;
- Para 6 – a notice, order or direction;
- Para 7 – the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime;

and may need to be considered as ‘exempt’.

(No Specific Ward Relevance)



Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday, 4th February, 2014

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor David Bush (Chair), Councillor Gay Hopkins (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Andrew Brazier, Simon Chalk, Andrew Fry, Roger Hill, Alan Mason, Yvonne Smith and Pat Witherspoon

Also Present:

Councillor Michael Braley

Officers:

S Horrobin, J Pickering, D Wheeler and J Willis

Democratic Services Officers:

J Bayley and A Scarce

96. APOLOGIES AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Carol Gandy. Councillor Roger Hill attended the meeting as her substitute.

97. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND OF PARTY WHIP

Councillor Fry declared an other discloseable interest in item 5 the Medium Term Financial Plan due to his personal family connection to the acting Head of Community Services.

98. MINUTES

It was highlighted that there was a typographical error on page eight of the agenda pack, Appendix 1 and it was noted that the cumulative reduction for 2014/15 should read £2.389m.

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 9th January 2014 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

.....
Chair

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday, 4th February, 2014

99. LIVING WAGE REPORT

Officers provided Members with an update in respect of the Living Wage and highlighted the following areas:

- Due to the on-going Job Evaluation work there were currently 91 members of staff who were paid the minimum wage of £6.31 per hour (the living wage being £7.65 per hour).
- Following the completion of Job Evaluation there would be no staff members earning below £7.65 per hour.

It was confirmed that following discussions over the last six months with Unison a couple of issues had been raised. Officers had considered the issues in detail and were due to meet shortly with UNISON representatives to discuss the matter further. Officers explained that they were committed to arriving at a collective agreement with UNISON and would report back to members and staff as soon as possible. It was also confirmed that reserves had been set aside to cover the potential cost of Job Evaluation. Unfortunately Officers were unable to provide Members with an end target date as the negotiations continued to be carried out.

RESOLVED that

the presentation on the Living Wage be noted.

100. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN

Officers presented the Medium Term Financial Plan 2014/15 – 2016/17 and explained that the report would be considered by the Executive Committee at its meeting to be held on 11th February 2014 with further consideration being given, together with the setting of the Council Tax at the Executive and full Council meetings on 24th February 2014. The following areas were highlighted for Members' consideration:

- Officers confirmed that there was currently a shortfall of £97,000 in the Council's budget.
- There were additional cost pressures as a result of various reductions in and changes to Government grants, for example, a reduction in the Grant Settlement and Business Rates and the introduction of Universal Credit.
- The New Homes Bonus grant would be used to offset the pressures facing the Council.
- There was the option of the Council Tax Freeze Grant available to the local authority, though the Council would be

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday, 4th February, 2014

asked to consider an increase in Council Tax of 1.9%. Members were advised that there was the possibility of a Government cap on any increase.

- Unavoidable budget pressures included funding from other agencies for the delivery of Council services, including Worcestershire County Council (WCC) and cuts in grant funding from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) associated with the administration of Housing Benefit.
- There had been an increase in Business Rates following revaluation of the Abbey Stadium. Officers confirmed that an appeal had been lodged in respect of this.
- The cost of borrowing, funding from reserves, bad debt provision and unidentified savings were also discussed in detail.

Members were informed that it was anticipated that the maintenance work at Threadneedle House would not now be carried out and that the building would be put up for sale within the following two weeks and would include the Post Office as a sitting tenant. Officers confirmed that there would be a reserve price on the property. Members questioned whether the loss of income from the Post Office rental charges had been taken into account within that reserve and Officers were asked to address this and the process for the sale of the building in a short report for the consideration of the Committee at a future meeting.

Officers highlighted the work which was being carried out in respect of service transformation and the need to reduce the costs associated with delivering enabling services due to focus on maintaining frontline services at an appropriate level. The suggested savings from the Democratic Services team and the affect these would have on the Committee were discussed in detail. It was confirmed that the current Task Groups would continue until their scheduled deadlines. However in future there could only be two Task Groups taking place at any one time. Whilst the Committee raised concerns about the reduction in support, the need for Members to make changes was acknowledged. It was also agreed that it was important that Members did not lose sight of the role of Overview and Scrutiny in holding the Council to account.

Members also raised concerns in respect of the reduction in Executive Committee and Council meetings as it was felt that this could lead to much lengthier meetings with much larger agendas. Officers confirmed that they were looking at different ways to report information to members that may not need specific decisions. It was

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday, 4th February, 2014

therefore not anticipated that the workload of the meetings would increase.

Members were informed that whilst the report detailed budget proposals for the following 12 months the budget process for 2015/16 would commence in six months' time, when the Council's financial position would be more clear particularly in respect of the unidentified savings. This six monthly report would be considered by Overview and Scrutiny, the Executive and full Council.

Officers explained that there was one budget bid for consideration. This was in respect of the economic development of the Eastern Gateway. A contribution of £25,000 had been requested in order to support a feasibility study. The Economic Development team hoped to complete as much of this work as possible, but consultants may be engaged for more specialist elements of the work needed. Members agreed that it was important that the Council had input and the opportunity to influence any development of this area.

RECOMMENDED that

the current position for 2014/15-2016/17 be noted and Officers be requested to review the savings that can be delivered to achieve a balanced budget.

101. FEES AND CHARGES 2014/15 REPORT

Officers presented the Fees and Charges Review 2014/15 report and in doing so highlighted the following:

- The delegated powers for the Head of Leisure and Cultural Services in order for the fees and charges to be altered by a variation of up to 30% and the circumstances under which this would be applied. Members requested a report outlining when this delegation had been exercised during the year.
- An overall average increase of 3% had been applied. Heads of Service had been encouraged to apply an increase of 2.5-3%.
- The Dial A Ride service had not had an increase for the last two years. The Older Peoples' Forum had been consulted and had been happy for an increase to be applied.
- The increase in charges for local community centres and the implications, if any, on the use of them by voluntary and community sector groups.
- The rationale behind the off peak and peak time increase for squash courts.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday, 4th February, 2014

- The increase in charges for swimming lessons and adult entrance fees, together with the allocation for free swimming for those aged under 16 years and over 65 years.
- Concessionary charges and the use of the Reddicard.
- The merits of the bulky waste collection service.

RESOLVED that

the Fees and Charges Review 2014/15 Report be noted.

102. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT INITIAL ESTIMATES / RENT SETTING 2014/15

Officers presented the report on Housing Revenue Account Initial Estimates and rent setting for 2014/15 and in doing so highlighted the following areas:

- This was the final year of rent restructuring to bring the process in line with the Registered Social Landlords (RSL).
- The rent increase for 2014/15 would be 5.13% with an average rent of £78.59 per week (this was for a three bedroomed property).
- The Major Repairs Reserve was briefly discussed and Members were advised that there had been budgetary transfers from the Housing Revenue Account into this account in 2011/12.
- It was confirmed that the provision for bad debts had increased due to concerns around the Universal Credit system when housing benefit would be paid directly to the householder rather than to the Council.

Members discussed concerns around some residents being unable to cope with the responsibility which would arise following the introduction of the Universal Credit system and what steps, if any, could be taken to support those residents. Officers confirmed that there were particular circumstances where the money could be paid directly to the Council and that all Benefits and Housing staff were being provided with appropriate financial training to support residents. The Citizens Advice Bureau and Two Pennies also provided support with financial issues and received funding from the Council.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) the draft 2014/2015 Estimates for the Housing Revenue account attached to the report at Appendix A, be approved;**

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday, 4th February, 2014

- 2) the actual average rent increase for 2014/015 be 5.13% (3.2% RPI plus 1.93% due to rent restructuring); and
- 3) the £3.5m be transferred to a reserve as a Revenue Contribution to Capital to fund the future Capital programme and repay borrowing.

103. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES AND SCRUTINY OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE'S WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee received the minutes of the Executive Committee meeting held on 14th January 2014 together with the most recent edition of the Executive Committee's Work Programme.

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the Executive Committee held on 14th January 2014 and the latest edition of the Executive Committee Work Programme be noted.

104. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

There were no updates in respect of the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme.

RESOLVED that

the Committee's Work Programme be noted.

105. TASK GROUPS - PROGRESS REPORTS

The following updates in respect of current Task Group reviews were provided:

- a) Abbey Stadium Task Group – Chair, Councillor Carole Gandy

Officers informed Members that the group had met with both Leisure and Cultural Services and Finance Officers to discuss the feasibility and financial implications of a number of draft recommendations. Members were informed that the café at the Abbey Stadium was now open and had been visited by some members of the Group. A visit to Stratford Leisure Centre had been arranged for 12th February 2014.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday, 4th February, 2014

b) Football Provision within the Borough Task Group – Chair, Councillor David Bush

Councillor Bush informed Members that the group had held its first meeting and a number of further dates had been confirmed with a schedule of work being agreed. Membership of the group was confirmed as Councillors Pat Witherspoon, Andrew Fry, Pattie Hill, Carole Gandy and Andrew Brazier.

c) Joint Worcestershire Regulatory Services Scrutiny Task Group – Redditch member, Councillor Alan Mason

As Councillor Mason had been unable to attend the previous meeting of the Task Group Officers provided an update.

As the work involved in investigation had proved to be more involved than originally anticipated, Members of the Task Group had agreed to put back the completion of the final report to June 2014. Two meetings had been held since the last report and had involved interviews with a representative of the Management Board as well as with the Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer of the host authority. The Members had been grateful for the open and honest manner in which witnesses had responded to questioning. A visit to the WRS base at Wyatt House in Worcester had been arranged for the forthcoming week.

d) Landscaping Task Group – Chair, Councillor Gay Hopkins

Councillor Hopkins informed Members that the group expected to complete their investigations by their deadline. Members had recently visited the place intervention team in Winyates and had received positive feedback from three new workers to the project. The group had explored the commercial aspect from such materials as bark and logs, had reviewed the impact of tree roots on pavements and had explored the legal implications of disputes about landscaping issues involving private properties. The group had reached a stage where they were concentrating on recommendations and the final report.

e) Voluntary Sector Task Group – Chair, Councillor Pat Witherspoon

Councillor Witherspoon informed Members that the investigations of the group had been more in depth than expected. As they needed to visit two further projects she requested that an extension be granted until July 2014.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday, 4th February, 2014

The group had held a successful visit to The Space and planned to visit both the Sandycroft Centre and the Bromsgrove and Redditch Network (BARN). Members already had a number of potential recommendations in mind in order to make improvements. The group had noted the large number of volunteers involved in supporting Council services, the value they brought to the local authority and the benefits of this volunteering to local communities.

RESOLVED that

the update reports be noted.

106. HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Councillor Witherspoon informed Members that the recent meeting of the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) had been a very forthright one with the local County Councillors asking some very pertinent questions in relation to the hospital review.

The HOSC had received a report from the Health and Wellbeing Board in respect of its mental health and suicide plan, which had brought home some of the issues in the Borough, particularly in respect of a bridge which had unfortunately been the location for a number of suicides in recent months and the preventative work which could be carried out to address this. The financial implications were a big issue, though it was felt that the placing of a notice at the location was not a sufficient deterrent to people considering committing suicide. Following discussions the Health and Wellbeing Board had agreed to monitor suicides across the County. Whilst the bridge referred to was acknowledged as a "hot spot" Members agreed that it was disappointing that further action was not forthcoming in relation to this location.

The YMCA and housing for the vulnerable had also been discussed. Councillor Witherspoon confirmed that specific reference to people with depression and how this was dealt with by GPs had not been discussed. Instead, the debate had focused more on issues around support in the community.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

4th March 2014

DIAL A RIDE EXTENDED SERVICE - MONITORING UPDATE REPORT

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Greg Chance, Portfolio Holder for Planning, Regeneration, Economic Development and Transport.
Portfolio Holder Consulted	
Relevant Head of Service	Judith Willis
Ward(s) Affected	No specific ward relevance
Ward Councillor(s) Consulted	N/A
Non-Key Decision	

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

- 1.1 This report contains an update on the use of Dial a Ride vehicles in the twelve months after the introduction of this service to the public.
- 1.2 The introduction of this service was proposed by the Youth Services Provision Task Group in 2012 and commenced in January 2013

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is asked to RESOLVE that

the report be noted.

3. KEY ISSUES

Background

- 3.1 The Youth Services Provision Task Group review was completed in April 2012. In this report Members identified that public transport was a barrier to participation in youth activities. The group therefore recommended that Dial a Ride vehicles should be provided to transport young people to local events and festivities.
- 3.2 The group's findings were presented for the consideration of the Executive Committee on 24th April 2012. At this meeting Members requested that a feasibility study be undertaken to explore the potential for Dial a Ride vehicles to be made available for groups of young people to hire.
- 3.3 A feasibility study was presented for the Overview and Scrutiny and Executive Committees' consideration in October 2012. At this stage it was determined that the Dial-a-Ride scheme operated under a permit issued under section 19 of the Transport Act 1985 should be extended to include making the Dial-a Ride

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

4th March 2014

vehicles available to those community organisations registered with the Council for use during evenings and weekends. This service was subsequently introduced in January 2013.

Financial Implications

- 3.4 There have been no financial implications as all requests have been completed within the existing resources of Dial a Ride. Charges to date have generated income of £2019; this has covered the cost of delivering the scheme. This shows that this service could be self-financing in the future.

Legal Implications

- 3.5 None as all users have been a member of the organisation either as Council officers or registered users.

Service / Operational Implications

- 3.6 We have no service or operational concerns. We had one breakdown at Upton Warren which was dealt with and all passengers were dropped off an hour late. This had no service implications for the Monday morning normal service. The service has been used several times since January 2013 which can be seen in Appendix 1

Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 3.7 The new service has predominantly been used to meet the needs of young disabled and older groups and have enabled them to access leisure and cultural facilities improving health and wellbeing.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT

None identified

5. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - Break down of trips completed and charges made.

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Original report dated 9th October 2012

Youth Services Provision Task Group's final report, (April 2012).

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE**

4th March 2014

AUTHOR OF REPORT

Name: Ruth Griffin
email: Ruth.griffin@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk
Tel.: 01527 548393

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

4th March 2014

APPENDIX 1

Groups using our vehicles

1. Leisure services - We supplied transport for a disabled children's group from Redditch to Upton Warren Outdoor centre on a Saturday morning for 6 weeks. This was so successful that they used us again. Feedback from the officer that went with the group was very positive and they said the driver was professional and courteous and enjoyed the journey there and back. The transport was always on time and was clean and tidy. All drivers were experienced in clamping of the wheel chairs and there were no complaints received.
2. Leisure Services – Picking up School Children from Abbey Stadium dropping off at Bromsgrove District Council offices.
3. Older Peoples Forum – This forum has used Dial a Ride throughout the summer to take the group to Arrow Valley Lake, Forge Mill Needle Museum and Morton Stanley Park. Comments made included that the drivers were great and on time. Customers also liked the fact that they could choose to go somewhere else in Redditch if the weather was bad.
4. Police and Crime Commissioner – Transported the Commissioner and his group around various projects in the Borough to show case community safety projects
5. Older Persons Luncheon Club – Had an evening at Hall Green Racing. Really pleased with the service and will use us again for special events.
6. Councillors' Fact Finding – Used us to look at Webheath area linked to a planning application.
7. Environmental Services – Transport for consultation on Bereavement Services for RBC and BDC.



Overview & Scrutiny

Annual Report

2013/14



www.redditchbc.gov.uk

CONTENTS

	Page Number
Foreword by the Chair	2
Introduction	3
Key Principles of Scrutiny	3
Commissioning Body Role	4
Developments in Scrutiny 2013/14	5
Pre-Decision Scrutiny and Budget Scrutiny	6
Monitoring Responses: Scrutiny Recommendations	6
Crime and Disorder Scrutiny	7
Health Overview and Scrutiny	7
Work Programme Planning 2013/14	8
Housing Density Targets Task Group	9
Abbey Stadium Task Group	10
Football Task Group	11
Joint WRS Task Group	12
Landscaping Task Group	13
Voluntary Sector Task Group	14
Scrutiny in the Future	15
Membership Gallery	16
Acknowledgements	17
Overview and Scrutiny Contact Details	18

FOREWORD BY THE CHAIR

Welcome to Redditch Borough Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee's annual report for 2013/14. Although previously a member of the Committee, this has been my first year as Chair. As such I wanted to focus on streamlining the agenda in order for Members to be able to concentrate on areas where they were able to make a contribution to the decision making process and to make better use of both their time and that of Officers during meetings and investigations. As a result of this work two main changes have taken place:

- Items on the agenda which had previously simply been noted were removed.
- A quarterly tracking process of recommendations put forward by the Committee has been put in place in order to ensure that recommendations which were accepted by the Executive Committee are implemented in a timely manner and if not we have increased the level of scrutiny to ensure that action is taken.

I began the year as Chair of a Task Group and have ended it as Chair of a different Task Group. At the beginning of the year I was Chair of the Housing Density Targets Task Group which concentrated on the impact of the Council's existing housing density requirements and helped to shape the content of the final version of Local Plan 4. I have ended the year as Chair of the Football Task Group which, although in its early stages, I believe it will be a constructive and useful investigation.

The Committee is ever mindful of its responsibility and commitment to residents whom it serves in scrutinising, impartially, those services which can impact enormously on their lives. The past year has been both busy and productive with numerous activities and services associated with the Council being examined. I hope that this good work continues as the Committee faces new challenges and changes.

My thanks go to Members and Officers for their continued support, especially those who have faced challenging scrutiny during the year. I'd particularly like to thank members of the Democratic Services team with special thanks due to Jess Bayley for assisting me in my first year as Chair.

PICTURE OF THE CHAIR TO BE ADDED.

**Councillor David Bush
Chair, Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Redditch Borough Council**

INTRODUCTION

There is an annual requirement for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to produce a report outlining its work and achievements during the previous year. The report also contains information about the reviews that have been undertaken by Task Groups, Short Sharp Review Groups, and the work of the Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel.

The Annual Report provides an opportunity for Members to consider future work programmes and to determine how the Overview and Scrutiny process could be further strengthened in future years. The report also provides Members with an opportunity to assess developments in scrutiny during the year. This year, in particular, significant changes have been made at the instigation of Members in order to streamline the scrutiny process. The impact of these changes on Overview and Scrutiny during the year is outlined in the report.

This report has been produced by Democratic Services Officers with lead responsibility for Overview and Scrutiny in consultation with the Chair of the Committee and the remaining eight Members.

KEY PRINCIPLES OF SCRUTINY

Members at Redditch Borough Council aim to ensure that the Overview and Scrutiny process complies with the four key principles of scrutiny identified by the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS), the organisation set up to promote effective scrutiny in local government. The four key principles of effective scrutiny are:

- to provide a critical friend challenge to executive policy-makers and decision-makers;
- to enable the voice and concerns of the public and its communities;
- for scrutiny to be carried out by independent minded governors who lead and own the scrutiny process; and
- to drive improvement in public services.

COMMISSIONING BODY ROLE**Membership 2013/14****Councillor Bush (Chair)****Councillor Hopkins (Vice-Chair)****Councillors Brazier, S Chalk, Fry, Gandy, Mason, Smith and Witherspoon**

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee at Redditch Borough Council is designed to act as a commissioning body. The Committee has the power to authorise policy reviews and to scrutinise issues of local interest in depth.

This year the Overview and Scrutiny Committee has commissioned a number of strategic reviews that have been conducted by Task Groups.

There are nine members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Committee meets approximately every four weeks, convening a week before the meeting of the Executive Committee. This provides Members with an opportunity to pre-scrutinise the work of the Executive and to ensure that decision-making processes remain transparent and accountable.

PICTURE TO BE ADDED AFTER 4th MARCH MEETING

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 2013/14.

DEVELOPMENTS IN SCRUTINY 2013/14

During the year a number of changes were made to streamline the Overview and Scrutiny process at the instigation of Members. This included:

- Reducing the number of items on the agenda for each meeting to enable Members to dedicate sufficient time to scrutinize topics effectively.
- Removal of standard items from the agenda which had been noted and had not resulted in any constructive action.
- Changes to the recommendation tracking process.
- A wholesale redesign of the Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel.
- Amendments to the template for final scrutiny reports and the annual report.

These changes were made to the Overview and Scrutiny process at a time when transformation was initiated for Democratic Services. As part of this process two service measures were introduced, which were designed to help assess the reduction of waste in the Committee system. The two measures focus on:

- The number of reports that are submitted for noting (rather than resulting in any constructive action).
- The number of reports that are submitted late for publication, as this then requires additional time and resources to produce further paperwork for Members' consideration.

The early work initiated by Members to streamline the Overview and Scrutiny process at the Council has ensured that the Committee and Officers reporting to the Committee have performed well in relation to both of these measures.

PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY AND BUDGET SCRUTINY

During 2013/14, the Committee was selective regarding the topics that it chose for pre-decision scrutiny. In recognition of the difficult economic situation for local government Members have chosen to focus on pre-scrutinising budget items prior to any decisions being taken by the Executive Committee.

As part of this process the following items were presented for the Committee's consideration during the year:

- Two presentations focusing on the anticipated budget position for Council services in the following three year period (presented in December 2013 and January 2014 respectively).
- The Medium Term Financial Plan for the period 2014/15 – 2016/17.
- The Fees and Charges Review 2014/15.
- The Housing Revenue Account Initial Estimate 2014/15.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has been consulted regarding Officers' plans to initiate the Council's budget setting process at an earlier date in future years. The

Committee expects to be fully engaged in these budget preparations and has already arranged to pre-scrutinise the Future Years Financial Plan, which will outline potential savings that could be made in 2016/17, in the new municipal year.

MONITORING RESPONSES – SCRUTINY RECOMENDATIONS

As part of the streamlining of Overview and Scrutiny processes this year the Committee altered their approach to monitoring the implementation of scrutiny recommendations. In previous years a monitoring update report focusing on action taken in response to Task Group recommendations would be presented for the Committee's consideration 12 months after the completion of the review. The Committee also received biannual updates on action taken to implement recommendations made directly by the Committee.

Members increasingly felt that this form of monitoring did not encourage a timely approach to enacting the recommendations. There was also a considerable amount of text in these reports, due to the length of time covered, which made it difficult for Members to identify areas of concern or outcomes that could be highlighted as examples of good practice.

For these reasons Members agreed that in future update reports should be provided on a quarterly basis for the Committee's consideration. Enacted recommendations are now reported back to the Committee once and after this promoted on the Council's website. Unimplemented recommendations continue to be reported to the Committee until they have been resolved.

CRIME AND DISORDER SCRUTINY

Membership: Councillors Brazier (Chair), Fry, Griffin, P Hill and R Hill.

The Police and Justice Act 2006 required every local authority in England and Wales from April 2009 to have a designated Committee with the responsibility for scrutinising the work of the local Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CRDP). The North Worcestershire Community Safety Partnership is the CDRP in Redditch.

The Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel, established in 2010 as a sub-committee of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, was allocated responsibility for scrutinising the work of the North Worcestershire Community Safety Partnership on behalf of Redditch Borough Council.

As part of the streamlined approach to scrutiny this year a decision was taken to reduce the standard number of meetings of this panel from four to one meeting per annum. Whilst the panel will retain the power to convene additional meetings as and when required this frequency will bring the panel in line with standard practice amongst local authorities across Worcestershire. The frequency of meetings was also established at this level in recognition of the fact that the panel had only made three recommendations in the previous three years.

HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

Councillor Witherspoon continued to act as the Council's representative on the Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) in 2013/14. District Councils are invited to appoint representatives to the HOSC to ensure that the interests of the district in relation to health are taken into account.

During the year Councillor Witherspoon advised Members that a range of issues had been discussed by HOSC including the following topics:

- The future of services at the Alexandra Hospital in Redditch.
- Relocation of the West Midlands Ambulance Service hubs.
- End of life and palliative care in Worcestershire.
- The reintroduction of the 111 NHS contact service.
- The Worcestershire Health and Wellbeing Board's Mental Wellbeing and Suicide Prevention Plan.
- Care for elderly residents living independently.
- The Well Connected Programme for the co-ordination of health and social care for local people.

WORK PROGRAMME PLANNING 2013/14

On 12th June 2013 a Scrutiny Work Programme Planning Event took place. This event, which was attended by 14 Members, was delivered as an Overview and Scrutiny training session. The aim of this session was:

- To provide Members with an overview of the powers available to scrutiny.
- To consider the strategic direction of the Council and the role that Overview and Scrutiny could play in this process.
- To provide Members with an opportunity to identify topics that might be suitable for further scrutiny during the year.

During the course of the event Members also received information about the Council's performance dashboard. Members were advised that the performance measures that had been developed for various Council services as part of the transformation programme would be monitored and the data made available for Members' consideration on the dashboard. This would help to support the Committee's role monitoring the performance Of services at the Council.

Unfortunately, at the time of writing the dashboard has not been finalised. Consequently, the Committee has not been able to dedicate as much time to performance monitoring as had been requested by Members the previous year. It is anticipated that this situation will be addressed in future years once the dashboard has been finalised.

However, following the training event a number of Task Group reviews were launched by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. By the end of the year Members were participating in five Task Group exercises, including a joint review hosted by another local authority. The majority of Task Groups commissioned by the Committee are due to be completed in the next few months.



Councillor David Bush, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, presenting feedback during the Overview and Scrutiny training event in June 2013.

HOUSING DENSITY TARGETS TASK GROUP

Membership: Councillors Bush (Chair), Bennett and Gandy (Councillor Gandy replaced Councillor Clayton in May 2013 following his appointment to the Executive Committee).

Completed: July 2013

The Housing Density Targets Task Group was established in February 2013 to review the impact of the Council's existing housing density requirements on the range of housing provision in the Borough. It was intended that the findings of the review would then be included as part of the Council's consultation into Local Plan No 4 which ran concurrently.

The Local Plan 4 outlines the vision and policies regarding what Redditch will aim to be like in 2030. It states that any housing development should take density limits into account, though each potential new housing site would be assessed on its own individual merits.

In particular the review focused on the contents of Policy 5, part of the Local Plan 4 which detailed the suggested densities of dwelling in proposed residential developments. At the end of the review Members brought forward a recommendation which focused specifically on the content of that policy with regard to housing density levels on: sites of less than 0.16 hectares, sites of more than 0.16 hectares and bungalow developments on sites of more than 0.16 hectares.

This recommendation was approved and helped to shape the content of the final version of Local Plan 4.



ABBEY STADIUM TASK GROUP

Membership: Councillors Gandy (Chair), Fry, Mason and Derek Taylor
Deadline: The review is due to be completed in June 2014.

The Abbey Stadium Task Group review was launched in September 2013. The group was tasked primarily with investigating actions that could be taken to enhance the services available to customers at the venue. Early in the review process Members were advised that Officers were undertaking a separate review of the gym and dance facilities available at the stadium, the findings from which are due to form the basis for a business case that will be presented to the Executive Committee in due course. For this reason, the group has not been focusing on those facilities, though they are intending to pre-scrutinise the business case prior to a decision being made on this subject.

During the course of the review Members have gathered evidence from a variety of sources. A number of expert witnesses have been interviewed, including Officers representing the Council's Leisure Service, Human Resources and Finance teams as well as the Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Tourism. The group has also visited the Abbey Stadium and visited Evesham Leisure Centre and Stratford Leisure Centre to learn about the methods of service delivery adopted at other leisure venues in the region.



The Task Group visited the Abbey Stadium in September 2013. The Members featured in this picture are (from left to right) Councillors Mason, Fry, Taylor and Gandy.

FOOTBALL TASK GROUP

Membership: Councillors Bush (Chair), Brazier, Fry, Gandy, P Hill and Witherspoon.

Deadline: The review is due to be completed in June 2014.

The Football Task Group was established in January 2014 to review football provision generally within the Borough of Redditch including that which is delivered by Redditch United Football Club. It is also reviewing the relationship between the Borough Council and Redditch United Football Club following the Executive's consideration of the Club's proposals for relocation in November 2013.

The review is at its very early stages, but has already interviewed a number of Council Officers, the Chairman of Redditch United Football Club and volunteers involved with community football delivered by the club. It has also considered a Football Participation Report for Redditch prepared by the FA which has highlighted a number of interesting points which will be investigated further as the Task Group progresses. Representatives of the FA will be invited to attend a future meeting. The Task Group are planning a meeting to which local stakeholders will be invited to discuss current/future football provision and needs within the Borough.



JOINT WRS TASK GROUP

Redditch Borough Council representatives: Councillors Mason (lead) and Hopkins (substitute).

Deadline: The review is due to be completed in June 2014.

The Joint WRS Scrutiny Task Group was established in 2013 to review the shared Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS). Elected Members from each of the Councils in Worcestershire, including Redditch Borough Council, have been appointed to the review which is being hosted by Bromsgrove District Council as the host authority for the shared service.

The key objectives of the review were for the group: to review the final business case for the shared service; to compare previous service levels at individual local authorities with current service levels in the shared service; to assess the performance of the services compared to previous performance levels; to investigate levels of customer satisfaction; and to review the governance arrangements for the shared service.

The group has gathered a large amount of evidence about WRS since their first meeting in September 2013 including performance data and customer feedback, in the form of compliments and complaints about the service. Members have interviewed a number of expert witnesses including representatives of the WRS Management Board, representatives of the Worcestershire Shared Services Joint Committee, staff employed in WRS including the Head of Regulatory Services and the Chief Executive, Section 151 Officer and Legal Services Manager from the host authority. The group has also visited Wyatt House in Worcester, the base for WRS, and attended meetings of the Joint Committee to observe the decision making process.

During the review Members have become increasingly concerned about the potential implications of the budget cuts proposed by partners for the future of shared regulatory services. It is likely that financial considerations will therefore feature significantly in the group's final report.

A variety of services are delivered by WRS including Licensing, Trading Standards and Environmental Health services.



LANDSCAPING TASK GROUP

Membership: Councillors Hopkins (Chair), Baker, Braley, M Chalk and Smith.

Deadline: The review is due to be completed in April 2014.

The Landscaping Task Group review was launched in October 2013. The Committee agreed to launch the review due to the fact that Members were reporting a significant number of enquiries from local residents about landscaping services.

The group was tasked with: exploring the Council's current approaches to delivering landscaping services; identifying actions that could be taken by elected Members to influence the delivery of services in their wards; proposing actions that could be taken to improve communications about landscaping services to elected Councillors, clarifying the Council's responsibilities in relation to tree roots impacting on pavements; and finding out about the legislative position for disputes about landscaping matters involving private properties.

The group has gathered evidence in a variety of ways throughout the review. This has included a visit to the Landscaping team based in Crossgates, and field trips to observe the trees intervention team and place intervention teams in action. Members have also interviewed representatives of the Environmental Services team to learn more about current developments in the delivery of landscaping services and potential opportunities to increase revenue for the Council through different practices in the Environmental Services team.



VOLUNTARY SECTOR TASK GROUP

**Membership: Councillors Witherspoon (Chair), Brazier and R Hill.
(Councillor Baker resigned from this group in November 2013).
Deadline: The review is due to conclude in July 2014.**

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee launched the Voluntary Sector Task Group review in October 2013. The review was established to provide Members with an opportunity to investigate the support provided to local Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) organisations by both the Council and partner organisations and to identify whether additional support could be provided in a difficult economic climate.

The group was aware that the Council's grant funding policy had been reviewed by the Third Sector Task and Finish Group in 2008. Members have considered this previous group's report and are keen to build on their findings. During the review the group has also interviewed a number of expert witnesses about; the Council's grants programme, Council tax rate relief, the links between the Redditch Local Strategic Partnership and the VCS, links between the Area of Highest Needs project and VCS organisations, and the existing partnership working between various Council departments and VCS organisations. Members have also been impressed to learn about the significant value of the contribution made by local volunteers to Council services and it is likely that this will be highlighted in further detail in the group's final report.

In the next few months the group is keen to concentrate on consulting with local representatives of the VCS. This will include visiting some groups to discuss the needs of the sector as well as the circulation of a questionnaire to elicit feedback from a wider cross section of VCS groups that are active in the Borough.

PICTURE OF THE GROUP VISITING COMMUNITY HOUSE ON 7TH MARCH
TO BE ADDED.

SCRUTINY IN THE FUTURE

This year the Overview and Scrutiny Committee has launched a number of reviews and has made some recommendations, many of which have been endorsed by the Executive Committee.

Members are aware that there will be further challenges in the year ahead. In particular, the Council's budget savings programme may impact on scrutiny both in terms of the subjects that Members choose to review and in relation to the resources available to support scrutiny.

Officers have been tasked with securing efficiency savings, particularly in enabling services. Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee acknowledged the need for savings to be made in all areas, particularly to enabling services, when they considered the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan 2013/14 - 2016/17 in February 2014. At this stage Members discussed actions that might need to be taken to achieve savings in the Committee process whilst minimising the impact on their work and the benefits of Members' work to the local community.

The budget proposals included a redesign of Democratic Services which will enable the Council to secure savings of £68,000. The three features of this redesign with direct implications for Overview and Scrutiny are:

- The reduction in the number of Committee meetings from 12 to 9 in the municipal year.
- The deletion of two vacant Democratic Services Officers' posts.
- The proposal for a maximum of two Task Groups to run at any one time, though this would not effect the potential to hold Short, Sharp Reviews as and when required.

In this context Members will need to ensure that the topics that are selected for scrutiny are priority issues for the Council and its customers and lead to constructive outcomes.

MEMBERSHIP GALLERY

The following Councillors have served as members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee this year.



Councillor David Bush
Chair of the Committee



Councillor Gay Hopkins
Vice Chair



Councillor
Andrew Brazier



Councillor
Simon Chalk



Councillor
Andy Fry



Councillor
Carole Gandy



Councillor
Alan Mason



Councillor
Yvonne Smith



Councillor
Pat Witherspoon

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Committee wishes to thank all those who took the time to provide information and advice during the course of the review, and to everyone who participated in the public consultation. The Committee would especially like to thank those listed below for taking the time to provide evidence and attend scrutiny meetings:

- Ray Cooke (Leisure Services Manager)
- Michael Craggs (Democratic Services Officer until October 2013)
- John Godwin (Head of Leisure and Cultural Services)
- Sam Morgan (Financial Services Manager)
- Jayne Pickering (Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Resources)
- Guy Revans (Head of Environmental Services)
- John Staniland (Executive Director of Planning, Regeneration, Regulatory and Housing Services until January 2014)
- Carl Walker (Environmental Services Manager)

Members would also like to thank the Redditch Standard, in particular Harriet Ernstsons, for their regular attendance at meetings of the Committee throughout the year and for helping to publicise its work to a wider audience.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY CONTACT DETAILS

For additional copies of this report, or to find out more about Overview and Scrutiny at Redditch Borough Council, please contact:

Jess Bayley, Democratic Services Officer
Jess.bayley@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk
 Tel: (01527) 64252 Extn: 3268

Amanda Scarce, Democratic Services Officer
a.scarce@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk
 Tel: (01527) 881443

Address:

Overview and Scrutiny,
 Democratic Services,
 Redditch Borough Council,
 Redditch Town Hall,
 Walter Stranz Square,
 Redditch, Worcestershire
 B98 8AH

Further information about the Overview and Scrutiny process at Redditch Borough Council can also be found on the Council's dedicated web pages. To access these web pages please use the web address attached here:

<http://redditch.whub.org.uk/cms/council-and-democracy/councillors-and-committees/overview-and-scrutiny.aspx>



Executive Committee

11th February 2014

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Bill Hartnett (Chair), Councillor Greg Chance (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Juliet Brunner, Brandon Clayton, John Fisher, Phil Mould, Mark Shurmer and Debbie Taylor

Also Present:

Councillor Andrew Brazier

Officers:

E Baker, R Cooke, C Flanagan, S Green, S Hanley, S Horrobin, S Morgan, J Pickering and L Tompkin

Committee Services Officer:

I Westmore

125. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillor Rebecca Blake.

126. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

127. LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader advised that the comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on Items 5, the Medium Term Financial Plan, and 6, the Housing Revenue Account Initial Estimates / Rent Setting 2014/15, were included in an Additional Papers pack.

The Leader expressed sympathy to all those in Worcestershire and other parts of the country who were suffering from the recent flooding and also his gratitude to workers in local government, the emergency services and the Environment Agency who were doing what they could to assist.

.....
Chair

Finally, the Leader wished to place on record the gratitude of the Council to Sue Horrobin, Environmental Services Manager, who was leaving the authority after more than a quarter of century of loyal and dedicated service to take up a new post in Scotland.

128. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 14th January 2014 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

129. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN

The Committee considered a report which set out the financial position for the revenue budget for 2014/15. Given the difficult financial situation in which this and other Councils found themselves, Officers were presenting a one year budget at this stage. A further report would be submitted to the Committee in September / October 2014 which would look ahead to the 2015/16 and 2016/17 financial years.

Officers highlighted the decrease in central Government funding over recent years which was, in part, being masked by the aggregation of specific grants into the overall financial settlement. Alongside this reduction in the Revenue Support Grant there were a number of other unavoidable budget pressures with which the Council was having to contend, such as pensions costs, reductions in funding from the County Council and reductions in specific revenue streams such as the Department of Work and Pensions administration subsidy. The Council was only being asked to consider a single revenue bid, that for the Eastern Gateway, which it was anticipated would result in economic development opportunities.

A number of measures had been undertaken to reduce the projected shortfall, including the redesign of a number of service areas, an increase in income through services such as CCTV and Lifeline and a proposed 1.9% increase in Council Tax for the coming year - there remained a small outstanding shortfall but Officers intended to address this prior to the next meeting of the Committee.

The Leader advised that he had written to the Government concerning the poor Financial Settlement as agreed at the previous meeting and thanked Jayne Pickering, Section 151 Officer, Sam Morgan, Deputy Section 151 Officer, and the Financial Services

Team for their hard work in developing the current budget proposals under difficult circumstances.

Concern was expressed that specific accumulated reserves were being used to meet the current deficit with the result that the Borough would be left in a far from ideal financial situation for ensuing years and administrations. The Eastern Gateway bid was also discussed, with the use of consultants being contrasted with a previous decision to remove a budget heading for consultants. Officers confirmed that expenditure for the use of consultants was presently being met through savings on vacant posts or through budgets already available to support transformational activity.

The Committee considered the comments upon the Medium Term Financial Plan from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and

RESOLVED that

the current position for 2014/15 be noted and Officers be requested to review the savings that can be delivered to achieve a balanced budget.

130. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT INITIAL ESTIMATES / RENT SETTING 2014/15

Members considered the Initial Estimates for the Housing Revenue Account for 2014/15 and the proposed dwelling rents for 2014/15.

Officers explained that the Council was at its borrowing limit in respect of the Housing Revenue Account and that this coming year represented the final year of the rent restructuring regime. Members noted that the provision for bad and doubtful debt had doubled for the coming year to reflect concerns over the introduction of Universal Credit. In addition, the point was made that the Council's rents still represented very good value for money, given the comparative levels of rent charged by other providers and the quality of accommodation provided.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) the draft 2014/2015 Estimates for the Housing Revenue Account attached to the report at Appendix A, be approved;**
- 2) the actual average rent increase for 2014/2015 be 5.13% (3.2% RPI plus 1.93% due to rent restructuring); and**

- 3) **that £3.5m be transferred to a reserve as a Revenue Contribution to Capital to fund the future Capital Programme and repay borrowing.**

131. FEES AND CHARGES

The Committee considered a report setting out the proposed Fees and Charges for the Council's chargeable services for 2014/15. Officers reported that an overall 3% increase in fees and charges would be achieved through approval of the proposals and the income target for the year had been increased by £91K when compared to the previous year.

Officers highlighted that the fifth row on Page 51 of the Executive Committee report should have read 'Bulky Collection – four items or more'. It was also explained that percentage increases had not been incorporated for all charges for practical and presentational reasons. In several instances, larger than 3% increases were attributed to charges not being increased for a number of years and the practical implications of amending printed scales of charges on an annual basis where the volume of transactions did not warrant it.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) **the fees and charges for 2014/15 as set out in Appendix 1- 9 to the report be approved; other than in cases where:-**
 - a) **fees or charges are statutory,**
 - b) **fees and charges are set externally, or**
 - c) **other Council- approved circumstances apply.**
- 2) **the Head of Leisure and Cultural Services has delegation to alter the Leisure fees and charges by a variation of up to 30%**

132. INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL FOR WORCESTERSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCILS - ANNUAL REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR 2014/15

The Committee received the latest report and recommendations from the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) in respect of the level of allowances to be paid to members of Redditch Borough Council for 2014/15.

The IRP had not proposed an increase in its recommended level of allowances for the coming year, but it was noted that the Council

had agreed a considerably lower level of allowances for 2013/14 than the IRP had recommended. The comparative figures for what was being recommended and what was being received by members was set out in the Appendix to the IRP report.

Members once again expressed their disquiet at having to make a decision on their own levels of remuneration.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) **the Council has regard to the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel;**
- 2) **the Council does not accept the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel, set out in detail in Appendix 1 to its report, for the following allowances:**
 - Basic**
 - Leader**
 - Deputy Leader**
 - Portfolio Holders**
 - Executive Members without Portfolio**
 - Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee**
 - Members of Overview and Scrutiny Committee**
 - Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Task Groups**
 - Chair of Audit and Governance Committee**
 - Chair of Planning Committee**
 - Chair of Licensing Committee**
 - Chair of Standards Committee**
 - Political Group Leaders;**
- 3) **the Council accepts the Panel's recommendations for travel, subsistence and dependent carers allowances;**
- 4) **for 2014-15, the Basic and Special Responsibility Allowances continue at the level set for 2013-14, as set out in detail in the final column in appendix 1 to the Panel's report;**
- 5) **the Panel's recommendation relating to the Parish Council be noted.**

133. REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL RESPONSE TO BIRMINGHAM DEVELOPMENT PLAN PRE-SUBMISSION CONSULTATION

The Committee considered a request to approve a response from Redditch Borough Council to the Birmingham Development Plan (BDP) Pre-Submission Draft. The response was required by 3rd March 2014.

Members noted that the matter had previously been considered by the Planning Advisory Panel but that there was little detail of any potential impact on the Borough contained within the Plan on which to base a meaningful response.

RECOMMENDED that

the Redditch Borough Council response (attached at Appendix 1 to the report) to the BDP Pre-Submission Draft be approved to be sent to Birmingham City Council.

134. POLICY FOR SECURING REPAYMENT OF DISABLED FACILITIES GRANTS AND LIFETIME LOANS

The Committee considered a report which set out a proposal for reviewing the process for securing Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) and Home Repair Assistance Loans (Lifetime Loans) paid to residents for works or adaptations to their homes.

Officers explained that the present system, which was unduly onerous for customers and Officers, had been adopted in 2009 as a result of a recommendation in an internal audit report. Officers were now recommending that the registration of any charge on the Local Land Charges Register was a more than adequate means of securing the Council's financial position.

RECOMMENDED that

repayment of Disabled Facilities Grants and Home Repair Assistance Lifetime Loans should be secured by means of registration on the Local Land Charges Register.

135. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Committee received the minutes of a recent meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 9th January 2014 be received and noted.

136. WORCESTERSHIRE SHARED SERVICES JOINT COMMITTEE

The Committee received the minutes of the most recent meeting of the Worcestershire Shared Services Joint Committee.

Executive Committee

11th February 2014

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Worcestershire Shared Services Joint Committee held on 21st November 2013 be received and noted.

137. MINUTES / REFERRALS - OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE, EXECUTIVE PANELS ETC.

There were no minutes or referrals under this item.

138. ADVISORY PANELS - UPDATE REPORT

The regular update on the activity of the Council's Advisory panels and similar bodies was considered by the Committee.

It was noted that the Grants Assessment Panel was meeting at present and would be reporting its recommendations on the allocation of grants to the next meeting of the Committee in March.

139. ACTION MONITORING

The Committee's Action Monitoring report was considered by Members. Councillor Brandon Clayton confirmed that Officers had dealt with both the queries he had raised and which were included. Councillor Juliet Brunner noted that the action from November referring to the cost of a meeting had been removed from the list although the information had not, as yet, been forthcoming. She had discussed the matter with Officers and had been informed that the matter was in hand and the information was in the process of being compiled.

The Meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and closed at 8.17 pm

.....
Chair



Overview and Scrutiny Committee

No Direct Ward Relevance

4th March 2014

WORK PROGRAMME

(Report of the Chief Executive)

Date of Meeting	Subject Matter	Officer(s) Responsible for report
ALL MEETINGS	REGULAR ITEMS	(CHIEF EXECUTIVE)
	Minutes of previous meeting Consideration of the Forward Plan Consideration of Executive Committee key decisions Call-ins (if any) Pre-scrutiny (if any) Referrals from Council or Executive Committee, etc. (if any) Task Groups / Short, Sharp Review Groups - feedback Committee Work Programme	Chief Executive Chief Executive Chief Executive Chief Executive Chief Executive Chief Executive Chief Executive
	REGULAR ITEMS Update on the work of the Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel. Quarterly Tracker Report	Chair of the Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel Relevant Lead Head(s) of Service

Overview and Scrutiny

Committee

4th March 2014

	<p>REGULAR ITEMS</p> <p>Updates on the work of the Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee</p> <p>Bi-Annual Monitoring Report – Redditch Sustainable Community Strategy</p>	<p>Redditch Borough Council representative on the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee</p> <p>Relevant Lead Head(s) of Service</p>
OTHER ITEMS - DATE FIXED		
4th March 2014	Dial a Ride - Monitoring Update Report	Relevant Lead Head of Service
4th March 2014	Overview and Scrutiny - Draft Annual Report	Councillor Bush
4th March 2014	Threadneedle House Report	Relevant Lead Head of Service
1st April 2014	Football Task Group – Final Report	Councillor Bush
1st April 2014	Landscaping Task Group – Final Report	Councillor Hopkins
1st April 2014	Quarterly Recommendation Tracker Report	Relevant Lead Head of Service
June 2014	Abbey Stadium Task Group – Final Report	Councillor Gandy

Overview and Scrutiny

Committee

4th March 2014

June 2014	Joint WRS Scrutiny Task Group – Final Report	Councillor Mason
June 2014	Positive Activities Update Report	Relevant Lead Head of Service
July 2014	Leisure Services Fees and Charges Report	Relevant Lead Head of Service
July 2014	Voluntary Sector Task Group – Final Report	Councillor Witherspoon
September / October 2014	Future Years Financial Plan – Pre-Scrutiny	Relevant Lead Head of Service
OTHER ITEMS – DATE NOT FIXED		
	Former Covered Market Area – Update Report	Relevant Lead Head of Service
	Healthwatch Worcestershire – Update Report	
	Land Maintenance Service Level Agreement - Update Report	Relevant Lead Head of Service
	Proposed Housing Review – Submission of Scoping Document	Councillor Brazier

Joint WRS Scrutiny Task Group: Update

On Thursday 6th February the group visited Wyatt House in Worcester, which is the base for WRS. During this visit Members received a presentation outlining in detail the work of WRS. Members also had a chance to tour the building and to speak to staff about the services they deliver across the county.

The latest meeting of the Joint WRS Scrutiny Task group took place on Thursday 20th February. During the meeting Members interviewed a representative of the host authority's legal department and the Chairman of the WRS Management Board. The governance structure for WRS was the main focus of the discussions during this interview.

The next meeting of the group is due to take place on 19th March. During this meeting Members will reflect on the progress they have made to date with the review and any outstanding issues that remain to be addressed. Members have also reached a stage where they are starting to discuss possible recommendations.

The review remains on track to be completed in time to report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in June.

